

## WORD OF THE LORD

Dr. Talmage Continues His Sermons on God and Nature.

### SWEET SPICES AND ONYCHA

Wonderful Force and Variety of the Bible's Imagery From Nature.

BROOKLYN, Feb. 19.—In the Tabernacle this morning Rev. Dr. Talmage continued his course of sermons on God everywhere. His subject was the "Conchology of the Bible, or, God Among the Shells," the text being taken from Exodus, 30th chapter, 35th verse, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte and onycha."

You may not have noticed the shells of the Bible, although in this early part of the sacred book God calls you to consider and employ them as he called Moses to consider and employ them. The onycha of my text is a shell found on the banks of the Red sea, and Moses and his army must have crushed many of them under foot as they crossed the blasted waters, onycha on the beach and onycha in the unfathomed bed of the deep. I shall speak of this shell as a beautiful and practical revelation of God, and as true as the first chapter of Genesis and the last chapter of Revelation or everything between.

Not only is this shell, the onycha, found at the Red Sea, but in the waters of India. It not only decorates the eye with its convolutions of beauty, white and lustrous and serrated, but blesses the nostril with a pungent aroma. This shellfish, accustomed to feed on epiphytes, is redolent with that odorous glass-violet when alive and redolent when dead. Its shells when burned bewitch the air with fragrance.

In my text, God commands Moses to mix this onycha with the perfumes of the altar in the ancient tabernacle, and I propose to mix some of its perfumes at the altar of Brooklyn Tabernacle, for, having spoken to you on the "Astronomy of the Bible, or, God Among the Stars," the "Chronology of the Bible, or, God Among the Centuries," the "Ornithology of the Bible, or, God Among the Birds," the "Mineralogy of the Bible, or, God Among the Amethysts," the "Ichthyology of the Bible, or, God Among the Fishes," I now come to speak of the "Conchology of the Bible, or, God Among the Shells."

It is a secret that you may keep for me, for I have never before told it to any one, that in all the realms of the natural world there is nothing so so fascinating, so completely absorbing, so full of suggestions, as a shell. What! More interesting than a bird, which can sing, when a shell cannot sing? Well, there you have made a great mistake. Pick up the onycha from the banks of the Red sea or pick up a nautilus from the beach of the Atlantic ocean and listen, and you have a whole choir of invisible voices—low, alto, soprano—in an unknown tongue, but seeming to chant, as I put them to my ear, "This sea is his, and he made it, whose singing, 'Thy way, O God, is in the sea,' others hymning, 'He ruleth the raging of the sea.'"

"What," says some one else, "does the shell impress you more than the star?" In some respects, yes, because I can handle the shell and closely study the shell, while I cannot handle the star, and if I study it must study it at a distance of millions and millions of miles.

"What," says some one else, "are you more impressed by the shell than the flower?" Yes, for it has far greater variety and far greater richness of color, so I could show you in thousands of specimens, and because the shell does not fade, as does the rose leaf, but maintains its beauty century after century, so that the onycha which the host of pharaoh's horses knocked aside in the chase of the Israelites across the Red sea may have kept its luster to this hour. Yes, they are so particular and many-colored that you might study them up until you would have a wall with all the colors of the wall of heaven, from the Jasper at the bottom to the amethyst at the top.

Oh, the shells! The petrified foam of the sea. Oh, the shells! The hardened bubbles of the deep. Oh, the shells, which are the diadems thrown by the ocean to the feet of the continents. How the shells are ribbed, grooved, cylindrical, mottled, iridescent! They were used as coin by some of the nations. They were fastened in belts by others, and made in handles of wooden spoons by still others. Mollusks not only of the sea, but mollusks of the land. Do you know how much they have had to do with the world's history? They saved the church of God from extermination. The Israelites marched out of Egypt 2,000,000 strong, besides flocks and herds. The Bible says "the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. They were turned forth out of Egypt and could not carry dough, but they prepared for themselves any victual." Just think of it! Forty years in the wilderness. Infidelity triumphantly said, How could they live 40 years in the wilderness without food? You say, Moses said, Oh, that was after a long while. They would have starved 50 times before the manna fell. The fact is, they were chiefly kept alive by the mollusks of the land or shellfish creatures. Mr. Frothingham and Mr. Stead took the same route from Egypt toward Canaan that the Israelites took, and they give this as their testimony:

"REMARKS ROUTE TO CANAAN." "Although the children of Israel must have consisted of about 2,000,000 souls, with baggage and innumerable flocks and herds, they were not likely to experience any inconvenience in their march. Several thousand persons might walk abreast with the greatest ease in the very narrowest part of the valley in which they first began to file off. Before afternoon expanded to above these leagues in width. With respect to forage they would be at no loss. The ground is covered with tamarisk, broom, clover and wild foin, of which latter especially succulent and nutritious food, besides almost every variety of indigenous plant and herb proper for pasturage."

"The whole edge of the valley through which the children of Israel marched are still reared with broom, which doubtless afforded food for their beasts, together with many other sorts of light forage, on which the Israelites could find the greatest abundance of food."

they brought with them on small iron plates, which form a constant appendage to the baggage of an oriental traveler. Lastly, the herbage underneath these trees and shrubs is completely covered with small of a prodigious size and of the best sort, and, however uninviting such a report might appear to us, they are here esteemed a great delicacy. They are so plentiful in this valley that it may be literally said that it is difficult to take one step without treading on them. "As the shellfish creatures saved the host of Israel on the march to the promised land, and the attack of infidelity at this point is defeated by facts, since it is founded on ignorance. In writing and printing our interrogation point has at the bottom a mark like a period and over it a flourish like the swing of a teamster's whip, and we put this interrogation point at the end of a question, but in the Spanish language the interrogation point is twice used for each question. At the beginning of the question the interrogation point is pressed upside down, and at the close of the question right side up. When infidelity puts a question about the Scriptures, as it always indicates ignorance, the question ought to be printed with two interrogation points, one at the beginning and one at the close, but both upside down.

THE ROYAL FAMILIES OF NATURE. Thank God for the wealth of mollusks all up and down the earth, whether feeding the Israelites on their way to the land flowing with milk and honey, or, as we are better acquainted with the mollusks, when hung to the beach of lake or sea. There are three great families of them. If I should ask you to name three of the great royal families of the earth, perhaps you would respond, the house of Stuart, the house of Hapsburg, the house of Bourbon, but the three royal families of mollusks are the univalve, or shell in one part; the bivalve, or shell of two parts; and the multivalve, or shell in many parts, and I see God in their every hinge, in their every tooth, in their every cartilage, in their every ligament, in their every spiral ridge, and in their every color, prism or prism, and their adaptation to this shell for still ponds and quick currents for boisterous seas. They all dash upon me the thought of the providential care of God.

What is the use of all this architecture of the shell, and why is it pictured from the outside lip clear down into its labyrinthine construction? Why the infinite of skill and reliance in a shell? What is the use of the color and exquisite curve of a thing so insignificant as a shellfish? Why, when the conchologist by dredge or rake fetches the crustaceous specimens to the shore, does he find at his feet whole alamburs and colossus and parthenons and crystal palaces of beauty in miniature, and those bring to light only an infinitesimal part of the opulence in the great subaqueous world. Linnaeus counted 9,500 species of shells, but conchology had then only begun its achievements.

While exploring the bed of the Atlantic ocean in preparation for laying the cable, shelled animals were brought up from depths of 1,600 fathoms. What lifting the telegraph wire from the M. A. T. and Red sea, shelled creatures were brought up from depths of 2,000 fathoms. The English admiralty, exploring in behalf of science, found mollusks at a depth of 3,438 fathoms, or 14,210 feet deep. What a realm awful for vastness!

As the shell is only the house and the wardrobe of insignificant animals of the deep, why all that wonder and beauty of construction? God's care for them is the only reason. And if God provide so minutely for them, will he not see that you have wardrobe and shelter? Wardrobe and shelter for a periwinkle! Shall there not be wardrobe and shelter for a man? Would God give a coat of mail for the defense of a nautilus and leave you no defense against the storm? Does he build a stone house for a creature that lasts a season and leaves without home a soul that takes hold on centuries and eons?

Hugh Miller found "the Footprints of the Creator in the old red sandstone," and I hear the harmonies of God in the tinkle of the sea shells when the tides come in. The same Christ who drew a lesson of providential care from the fact that God clothes with grass the field instructs me to draw the same lesson from the shells.

THE CORAL INSECT TEACHES FAITH. In almost every man's life, however well born and prosperous for years, and in almost every woman's life, there comes a very dark time, at least once. A conjunction of circumstances will threaten bankruptcy and homelessness and starvation. It may be that these words will meet the ear or will meet the eye of those who are in such state of foreboding. Come, then, and see how God gives an ivory palace to a water animal that you could cover with a 10-cent piece and clothes in armor against all attack a coral no bigger than a snowflake. I do not think that God will take better care of a bivalve than of one of his own children.

I take to your feet with the gospel take the most thorough evidences of God's care for his creatures. I pile around you great mounds of shells that they may teach you a most comforting theology. Oh, ye of little faith, walk among these arbors of coral and look at these bonquets of shell fit to be handled a queen on her coronation day, and see those fallen rainbows of color, and examine those lilies in stone, those primroses in stone, those halictopes in stone, those cowslips in stone, those geraniums in stone, those japonicas in stone.

O ye who have your telescopes ready looking out on clear nights, trying to see what is transpiring in Mars, Jupiter and Mercury, know that within a few hours' walk or ride of where you now are there are whole worlds that you might explore, but of which you are unconscious, and among the most beautiful and suggestive of these worlds is the conchological world. Take this lesson of a providential care. How does that old hymn go? We sail, like ships, by tempests tossed. We perish, like ships, but cannot be lost. Though waves merge the wind and the tide, The promise anchors on the land will provide.

GOD'S CARE AND MAN'S FREEDOM. But while you get this pointed lesson of providential care from the shelled creatures of the deep, notice in their construction that God helps them to help themselves. This house of stone in which they live is not dropped on them and is not built around them. The material for it comes from their own bodies and is adorned with a colored fluid from the pores of their own neck. It is a most interesting thing to see these crustaceous animals fashion their own houses out of

carbonate of lime and membrane. And all of this is a mighty lesson to those who are waiting for others to build their fortunes when they ought to go to work and, like the mollusks, build their own fortunes out of their own brain, out of their own sweat, out of their own industries. Not a mollusk on all the beaches of all the seas would have a house of shell if it had not itself built one. Do not wait for others to shelter you or prosper you. All the crustaceous creatures of the earth from every flake of their covering and from every ridge of their tiny castles on Atlantic and Pacific and Mediterranean coasts say, "Help yourself, while God helps you to help yourself."

These people who are waiting for their father or rich old uncle to die and leave them a fortune are as silly as a mollusk would be to wait for some other mollusk to drop out a shell equipment. It would kill the mollusk as in most cases it destroys a man. Not one person out of a hundred ever was strong enough to stand a large estate by inheritance dropped on him in a blink. Have great expectations from only two persons—God and yourself. Let the onycha of my text become your preceptor.

But the more I examine the shells the more I am impressed that God is a God of emotion. Many scoff at emotion and seem to think that God is a God of cold geometry and iron laws and eternal apathy and enthroned stoicism. Not so! The shells with overpowering emphasis deny it. While law and order reign in the universe, you have but to see the lavishness of color on the crustacean, all shades of crimson from faintest blush to blood of battlefield, all shades of blue, all shades of green, all shades of all colors from deepest black to whitest light, just called out on the shells with no more order than a mother promissories or calculates how many kisses and hugs she shall give her babe waking up in the morning sunlight.

Yes, my God is an emotional God, and he says, "We must have colors and let the sun paint all of them on the scroll of that shell, and we must have music, and here is a card for the robin, and a psalm for man, and a doxology for the seraphim, and a resurrection call for the angel." Ave, he shouts himself a God of sublime emotion when he flung himself on this world in the personality of Christ to save it, without regard to the tears it would take, or the blood it would exhaust, or the agonies it would crush out.

When I see the Louvres and the Luxembourges and the Vatican of Divine painting strewn along the 8,000 miles of coast, and I hear in a forest on a summer morning musical academies and Handel's societies of full orchestras, I say God is a God of emotion, and if he ob serves mathematics it is mathematics set to music, and his figures are written not in white chalk on blackboards, but written by a finger of sunlight on walls of jasper and trumpet creeper.

WE HAVE A CLEAR RELIGION. In my study of the conchology of the Bible this onycha of the text also impresses me with the fact that religion is perfume. What else could God have meant when he said to Moses, "Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte and onycha?" Moses took that shell of the onycha, put it over the fire, and as it crumbled into ashes it exhaled an odor that hung in every curtain and filled the ancient tabernacle, and its sweet smoke escaped from the sacred precincts and saturated the outside air.

Perfume! That is what religion is. But instead of that some make it a malodor. They serve God in a rough and scorb way. They box their child's ears because he does not properly keep Sunday instead of making Sunday so attractive the child could not help but keep it. They make him learn by heart a difficult chapter in the book of Exodus, with all the hard names, because he has been naughty. How many disagreeable good people there are! No one doubts their piety, and they will reach heaven, but they will have to get fixed up before they go there or they will make trouble by calling out to us: "Keep off that grass!" "What do you mean by plucking that flower?" "Show your tickets!"

Oh, how many Christian people need to obey my text and take into their worship and their behavior and their conversations and presbyteries and general assemblies and conferences more onycha! I have sometimes gone in a very gala of spirit into the presence of some disagreeable Christians and in five minutes felt wretched, and at some other time I have gone depressed into the company of suave and genial souls, and in a few moments I felt exultant. What was it? difference! It was the difference in what they burned on their censers. The one burned onycha; the other burned asfetida.

THE ROYAL PURPLE. In this conchological study of the Bible I also notice that the mollusks or shelled animals furnish the purple that you see richly darkening so many Scripture chapters. The purple stuff in the ancient tabernacle, the purple girdle of the priests, the purple mantle of Roman emperors, the apparel of Dives in purple and fine linen—aye, the purple robe which in mockery was thrown upon Christ—were colored by the purplish shells on the shores of the Mediterranean. It was discovered by a shepherd's dog having stained his mouth by breaking one of the shells, and the purple aroused admiration.

Cruelly purified. Six pounds of the purple liquor extracted from the shellfishes were used to prepare one pound of wool. Purple was also used on the pages of books. Bibles and prayer books appeared in purple vellum, which may still be found in some of the national libraries of Europe. Pintarch speaks of some purple which kept its beauty for 180 years. But after while the purple became easier to get, and that which had been a sign of imperial authority when worn in robes was adopted by many people, and so an emperor, jealous of this appropriation of the purple, made a law that any one except royalty wearing purple should be put to death.

Then, as if to punish the world for that outrage of exclusiveness, God obliterated the color from the earth, as much as to say, "If all cannot have it, none shall have it." But though God has deprived the race of that shellfish which afforded the purple there are shells enough left to make us glad and worshipful. Oh, the enchantment of hue and shape still left all up and down the beaches of all the continents! These creatures of the sea have what roots of exalted providential. They dwell under what periwinkle blue as the sky and beryl as a sunset and maroon as an sunset

And am I not right in leading you for a few moments through this mighty realm of God so neglected by human eye and human footstep?

It is said that the harp and lute were invented from the fact that in Egypt the Nile overflowed its banks, and when the waters retreated tortoises were left by the million on all the lands, and these tortoises died, and soon nothing was left but the carapace and grille of these creatures, which tightened under the heat into musical strings that when touched by the wind or foot of man vibrated, making sweet sounds, and so the world took the hint and fashioned the harp, and am I not right in trying to make music out of the shells and lifting them as a harp, from which to thrum the jubilant praises of the Lord and the pathetic strains of human condolence?

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE. But I find the climax of this conchology of the Bible in the pearl, which has this distinction above all other gems—that it requires no human hand to bring out its beauty. Job speaks of it, and its sheen is in Christ's sermon, and the Bible, which opens with the onycha of my text, closes with the pearl. Of such value is this crustaceous product I do not wonder that for the exclusive right of fishing for it on the shores of Ceylon a man paid to the English government \$200,000 for one season.

Aquibito is the pearl I do not wonder that Pliny thought it was made out of a drop of dew, the creature rising to the surface to take it and the chemistry of nature turning the liquid into a solid. You will see why the Bible makes so much of the pearl in its similitudes if you know how much it costs to get it. Boats with divers sail out from the island of Ceylon, 10 divers to each boat. Thirteen men guide and manage the boat. Down into the dangerous depths, amid sharks that swirl around them, plunge the divers, while 60,000 people anxiously gaze on. After three or four minutes' absence from the air the diver ascends, nine-tenths strangled and blood rushing from ears and nostrils, and flinging his pearly treasure on the sand falls into unconsciousness.

Oh, it is an awful exposure and strain and peril to fish for pearls, and yet they do so, and is it not a wonder that to get that which the Bible calls the pearl of great price, worth more than all other pearls put together, there should be so little anxiety, so little struggle, so little enthusiasm? Would God that we were all as wise as the merchantman Christ commended, "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

But what thrills me with suggestiveness is the material out of which all pearls are made. They are fashioned from the wound of the shellfish. The exposure, and from that wound is fixed and hardened and enlarged into a pearl. The ruptured vessels of the water animal fashioned the gem that now adorns finger or earring or sword hilt or king's crown. So out of the wounds of earth will come the pearls of heaven. Out of the wound of conviction the pearl of pardon. Out of the wound of bereavement the pearl of solace. Out of the wound of loss the pearl of gain. Out of the deep wound of the grave the pearl of resurrection joy. Out of the wounds of a Saviour's life and a Saviour's death the rich, the radiant, the everlasting pearl of heavenly gladness.

"And the 12 gates were 12 pearls." Take the consolation, all ye who have been hurt, whether hurt in body, or hurt in mind, or hurt in soul. Get your troubles sanctified. If you suffer with Christ on earth, you will reign with him in glory. The tears of earth are the crystals of heaven. "Every several gate was of one pearl."

CANNOT CATCH GLADSTONE.

One hears various stories of the cleverness displayed by Mr. Gladstone in eluding inconvenient questions, but the following, which is perfectly authentic, strikes a London correspondent as being quite the best of the bunch. The other evening some earnest young radicals were invited to meet the prime minister. They naturally longed to discuss the political situation with him and to receive some advice for their guidance. Mr. Gladstone, however, despatched with great eloquence on the proper place in the church for the organ.

Then there was a short lull, and the boldest of them pulled himself together and propounded a somewhat humiliating question on home rule, or about it. The old parliamentary hand either did not hear or affected a convenient deafness. Before the sentence could be repeated Mr. Gladstone was deep in a learned argument with a clergyman present upon Lysons, ancient and modern. The remainder of the company sat in silence, with feelings that can be easily imagined then described.—Philadelphia Press.

A Woman's Back. The mainspring of her life. What can she do, where can she go, so long as that deadly backache saps both strength and ambition?

She cannot walk, she cannot stand; her duties are burdensome; she is miserable. The cause is some derangement of the uterus or womb. Backache is the sure symptom. The one unfailing remedy is Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. A woman discovered it and gave it to woman. Mrs. T. W. Lane, of Holyoke, Mass., tells what a comfort it is to write to a woman about her peculiar troubles, and have a woman read her letters and give a woman's sympathy and help. Thousands send Mrs. Pinkham letters, grateful for renewed life.

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# The Women's Friend!

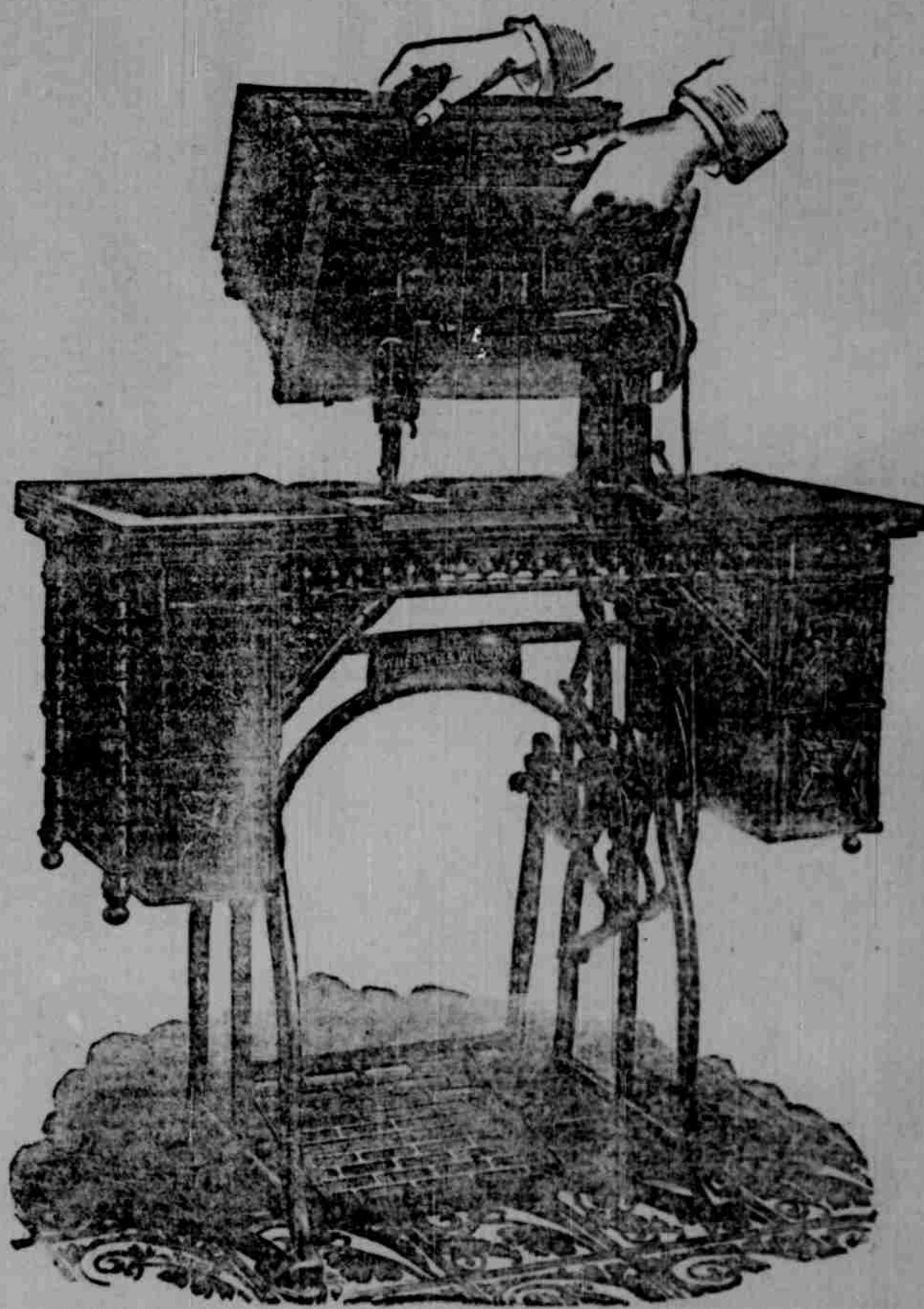
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